



**MINUTES
CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION
June 21, 2022**

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Council member Dyvik acting as Mayor Pro-Tempore at 4:30 pm.

Present: Mayor: Charlie Miner (arrived late at 5:12 pm, with prior notice); Council: Deirdre Kvale, Mike Feldmann, Jahn Dyvik (Mayor Pro-Tempore), and Gina Joyce

Staff Present: City Administrator: Scott Weske; Fire Chief: James Van Eyll; and City Attorney: John Thames

Absent: None

APPROVE AGENDA

A motion was made by Feldmann, seconded by Joyce, to approve the agenda as presented. Ayes: all.

OPEN CORRESPONDENCE

Sam Rettinger, 425 Lake Street – Mr. Rettinger stated that he did not think the public is really aware of what is going on with the Fire Department situation. He commented that response times used to be five minutes and now response time is at least 10-15 minutes and sometimes longer than that. He indicated that, in his opinion, the residents of the City are less safe, are paying a lot more money for a Fire Department than needed, and he thinks there are better ways that the City can move forward. He noted that he would like to see the Fire Station be located closer and recommended that everything be moved into the Public Works building. He added that he thinks the City should hold an open meeting and invite the public because this has to do with public safety.

Council member Dyvik thanked Mr. Rettinger for his input and assured him that the Council wants to be transparent, but explained that there will be some tough decisions coming up.

BUSINESS ITEMS

Update and Discussion Regarding Fire Department Matters

Council member Dyvik reported that he and Mayor Minor had met with Orono Council members Victoria Seals and Richard Crosby II the previous Friday, at their request. He gave a brief overview of the discussion that took place at the meeting. He noted that they communicated Orono is not at all interested in a partnership and instead they want 100% ownership and control. Ms. Seals and Mr. Crosby stated that they would not vote to sell Orono's share of the Fire Station 1 building as proposed by Long Lake. He mentioned that he and Mayor Miner had informed them that they had selected Orono Mayor Walsh as their lead negotiator, and pointed out that the conversation they were having at this meeting was not in alignment with Mayor Walsh's comments and what he had asked for. He observed that it was not a hostile meeting, but they asked he and Mayor Miner to come back to the Council to see if they would reconsider the offer they had made. He had explained to them that an offer had been made, which means it cannot just be ignored.

Council member Kvale asked if the email response from the Mayor of Orono was considered a legal response and an acceptance of the terms.

City Attorney Thames clarified that it would not be considered an acceptance of terms; however, Orono has nominated Mayor Walsh as their lead negotiator and has not formally indicated an alteration to that arrangement, which means the City has received a request to formalize a purchase agreement offer.

Council member Dyvik agreed that the next step would be to formalize a purchase agreement offer and noted that he is still in favor of the offer that was made to Orono for buyout. He reviewed highlights of other points discussed at the meeting and other statements that have been made by Orono.

Council member Joyce commented that she really did not trust the Orono Council and thinks regardless of what amount of money they may offer or whatever 'deal' they come up with, it will not be worth it. She noted that she felt Long Lake has made a lot of progress on the possibility of partnering with other communities.

Council member Dyvik shared more details from the meeting and explained that he feels that from Orono's perspective, it is more about control. He recognized that the firefighters are caught in the middle of this situation, which is unfortunate, but Long Lake did not create the current circumstances and now it has to do what is best for the residents. The City will not succumb to bully tactics or submit to a hostile takeover if it is not in their best interest to do so. He indicated that he sees that there are two options for the Council to consider: either continue down the path the City is going and give Orono more information on the offer that was already made, or reconsider and start giving Orono the message that they will need a ton of cash to do it the other way.

City Administrator Weske suggested that this may be a good time to move into the closed session to start having some of those discussions.

Council member Kvale questioned what would happen in a situation where both cities want to buy the Fire Station and questioned if it would go to mediation.

City Attorney Thames responded that may be an option and added that this is part of the problem with having a contract that was completely silent on the matter of transition. This matter could involve litigation, voluntary mediation, the property could be sold outright, or for a time it could be jointly operated, but he reiterated that there is no clear path because the contracts do not help in that way. He gave examples of hypothetical situations with various scenarios related to operations and repairs. He recommended that the Council move into closed session to discuss a formal response to the only official response the City has received from Orono Mayor Walsh.

Closed Session Pursuant to Minn. Stat. 13D.05, Subd 3(c) (3): Develop or Consider Offers/Counteroffers for the Purchase or Sale of Real Property Located at 340 Willow Drive N and Other Fire Department Property

A motion was made by Kvale, second by Joyce, to enter into a Closed Session meeting. Ayes: all.

A motion was made by Dyvik, second by Feldmann, to end the Closed Session portion of the meeting. Ayes: all.

OTHER BUSINESS

No other business was discussed.

ADJOURN

A motion was made by Dyvik, second by Joyce, to adjourn the work session meeting at 6:26 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Scott Weske
City Administrator